



Southampton

22nd February 1960

Dear Tom,

I am struggling to convince everyone of the rightness of my ideas on spaces with two non-vanishing homotopy groups. But the details are beastly. They kept me up till 2 three last week, and I thought that I was beaten on Friday; but whilst driving round Sussex on Saturday I discovered a method of getting round the difficulty. It is with some measure of impatience that I have dragged myself away from mathematics to attend to writing up step dancing again. First my replies to your letter, then I'll tell you the main things about Devon and Sussex.

1. I have not got the MacFarlane word steps.
2. I shall come up on the D.45 from Southampton, arriving in Birkenhead on at about 6pm. Don't be surprised if I make it on Thursday instead of Friday - I may be able to get away at 10am on Thursday, but I shall not be able to let you know.
3. I agree with your comments on the society as it is presented in the News and Journal. What did you make of the accounts of the join of the EFDS & FSS in the News?

I was bedevilled by bad weather in Devon. I have not yet had chance to write up the notes - but here are the main things.

The Humphreys: Mrs from NE Devon, Mr from Wales; been in Sidbury 15 years. Did folk dancing then did mummies plays. Mr Rew, from whom many of the tunes were collected, learned them at dancing classes at his uncles farm (they moved the furniture out of the ~~bed~~ dining room) for <sup>youngsters</sup> ~~children~~ from several farms. Further, there is a record in the school log for 22 Sept 1880 - Refused to take lessons today this morning. Pupil Teachers attended last evening a dancing class at the Red Lion public house.... There were threepenny hops at the Red Lion with lancers, Quadrilles, round dances. Of the dances in the book, Double Change sides and Down sides + up the middle were still in use 15 years ago at socials, the others have been pulled back from family occasions to public occasions. Pretty little clear + Pocket handkerchief dance had been out of socials for only a short time, the others for varying lengths. (This is all from the Humphreys - it would be nice to find time to check with primary sources).

Highland Fling: dispersal from continental maypole -

A1: Hop slightly on LF, tap with RF four times in 2nd int,

L hand up, R hand on hip !

Three handed reel: A1 Cross RF in front of LF, knees straight; feet astride sitting on hunkers; etc.

Down the middle —. Note — show off may be a complicated twisting figure with two linking handkerchieves or the man might step dance and the woman dance round him.

They had very little information on stepping, but Mrs Humphreys danced for me in vigorous small steps with neat footwork.

Travelling: (4) a 1 & 2 Hop step close step, using slightly crossed 5th position — feet straight forward. Some people kicked back leg up backwards (by bending knee) on 2.

Womans setting — Pole B, slightly crossed flat 5th position (feet facing front) with some throw forward at the end.

Broom dance — apparently in some EFDSS Magazine (ca. 1951). It was often done over 4 brooms with the heads in the centre of a square, the four men keeping in time. The steps are very similar to those of the bacca pipes jig.

For the references to dancing classes we should compare Jim Cooper ca 80 — Sticklepath — who was hired by the local concertina men as an M.C. to help teach the local youngsters lancers, quadrilles and round dances at the house of one of the landowners who got them have a large room. They had about 40 a time — once a week through the winter at 6d a time ca 1910.

He said that the men picked up their step dancing and were not taught. The steps are built up just as you please. Thus it is difficult to learn & much about them for you have to get the men into the mood with live music; and then they dance through so that you can not pick up anything.

However, later I got Bob Gann's uncle Bob to dance for me - so here is your exercise in reconstruction:

44 bars per min.



- 1.1 Step on RF in place 1st position
- 1 Beat L heel in flat 3rd position
- 2 Beat L toe in flat 3rd position
- 1 Beat L toe in flat 3rd position.
- 3 Beat R heel without taking RF off ground.
- 4 Beat L toe in rear 3rd position

to i.e. ball of foot

2 ~

3.1 Repeat 1, 2 twice

- 7.1 & 2 As 1
- 1 Beat L toe in rear 3rd pos
- 3 Step on LF in place 1st pos
- 1 Beat R heel in flat 3rd pos
- 4 Beat R toe in flat 3rd pos
- 1 Step on to RF in rear 3rd pos.

The whole step must be done with the knees flexed to get the heel beats by a bending of the knee.

- 8.1 Step on to RF in rear 3rd pos.
- 2 ——— RF in rear 3rd pos.
- 3. ——— LF in 4th before 3rd 4th before 5th.

Uncle

Bob also did

1. 1 Step on L.F in 1st & Step on R.F <sup>flat 5th</sup> ~~4th before 5th~~ 2 Step on L.F in place  
 3 — R in 1st & L — — — — — 4 — R — — — — —  
 2 1. L in 1st & R <sup>flat 5th</sup> ~~4 before 5~~ 2. L in 1st & R semi 4th  
 3 " & " 4 " .

He had seen 3 men dance in line at Whidden Down but could remember no more. The tune for the broom dance was 'The cat got the measles.'

Lewis (Scan) Tester, 72, Horsted Keynes, Sussex.

Gave me a whole set dance - the Gallop - probably well known.

It is only ladies fwd + back twice, men ditto, all cast round circle anticlockwise, ~~and~~ top couple gallop down + swing at the bottom.

Step dancing again built up of elementary bits including a ~~Flat 5~~ <sup>hope have on the spot</sup> and the 'heel, toe, toe' treble — also Bob Gann warming up step

1 2 + a 3. Usually four men would dance, two facing two, for two strains, then move for two a strain. 'Move' seems to be according to inclination but often comes cross 3 times.

Sometimes there would be just 2 men and they would change places, possibly just once and start dancing again, or possibly cross several times to take all the ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> of a strain of music. If a man danced and was not joined by anyone else he would sometimes walk round in a circle for a breathe before starting again.

6.

Lewis hired an M.C. ~~when he~~ in the 4 or 5 years about 1900 to help him run dances for the teenagers (3 villages, 3 nights a week). The rooms would hold 2 sets of dancers. He took one set and the M.C. took the other. They did dances, Quadrilles, Alabets, Walty Gattillion, Walty, Walty Vesina, Polka, heel+toe polka etc. He learned new dances by seeing them done at bigger functions, and new tunes from Woodworth's 6d gramophone records.

There the broom stick dance was done with sticks (no broom heads on them) and consisted only of throwing leg over with stick held horizontally. Often done by 4 in square, just like step dancing.

Tentative conclusions here are (i) primitive kind of step dancing not formalised (ii) temporary semi-professional dancing teachers teaching the latest fashions. Does one need the really professional teacher to formalise step dancing into fixed sequences? The kind of stepping I've seen here was certainly not worth spending time which could better be spent on morris or sword in the 1920's or 30's.

7.

Second hand quotes from Thomas Hardy taken from  
Ruth A Fier 'Folkways in Thomas Hardy' Univ Pennsylvania,  
Philadelphia 1931.

1. The young men ... footed it to the girls ... In the background was one  
happy mandaring by himself ...
2. And when I make the fiddle squeak at the end, every man kiss his  
partner under the mistletoe (This from 'Life's little Fractions' "A few  
Grouted Characters").

4th well into tomorrow now - so 4th done.

Yours

Frank.

P.S. 4th bring up my tape - it is recorded at  $7\frac{1}{2}$ " per min.

Enclose the exam papers which I promised some time ago;  
and a letter from Dr Mackean.